American Head & Neck Society Cancer Prevention Service
Community Service Awards
Reports from Past Award Recipients

2020

Project: ***Head and Neck Cancer Screening in Urban Underserved Neighborhood in Cleveland, Ohio***

Project Leads: ***Kate Clancy, Chelsea Hamill, Nicole Fowler, Akina Tamaki***

Background: Cleveland, Ohio ranks among the top cities in the country for access to care and has two tertiary care cancer hospitals and multiple academic centers with strong oncologic care. Despite this, barriers to care such as poverty, lack of medical insurance, and low health literacy lead to delayed presentation and advanced disease upon presentation in many head and neck cancer patients.

According to US Census data, an estimated 35% of the Cleveland population lives in poverty, which equates to approximately 230,000 people. There are multiple neighborhoods designated as medically underserved populations/areas including East Cleveland and other neighborhoods within Cuyahoga county. Nearly 25,000 people are considered homeless. These at-risk populations also have a higher rate of tobacco and alcohol abuse. This population, has a higher risk of developing head and neck cancer, may not otherwise seek out medical evaluation, and are an ideal target for a head and neck cancer screening event.

Overview of Event: In the setting of the COVID 19 pandemic, large-scale medical screenings and wellness fairs have been indefinitely postponed. Large gatherings are discouraged. However, our department adapted to host a successful Oral and Head and Neck cancer screening event in Cleveland, Ohio. Our team included head and neck surgeons, residents, nurses, and administrative staff. With the assistance of the University Hospitals Community Outreach program, we contacted and coordinated this event with a local homeless shelter. The shelter's residents were encouraged to sign up for a specific appointment time, so social distancing was feasible. Patients were screened upon entry by nursing staff for high-risk features: history of tobacco and alcohol abuse, minimal dental care, and/or presence of oral lesion. A comprehensive history and oral exam was then performed by an otolaryngology resident and faculty member. For patients who remained high risk after examination or required further evaluation or care, appropriate referrals and information was provided and coordinated by the administrative team. All participating individuals were provided with information pamphlets provided by the American Head and Neck Cancer alliance as well as bags with oral care supplies and hand sanitizer. Funds from the American Head and Neck Society Community Service award were used for the materials to create the mobile clinic space, personal protective equipment, medical exam and cleaning supplies, and the giveaway materials (oral care, sanitizer) for participating patients.

2017

Project: ***Improving Awareness and Understanding of Betel Quid Use and Oral Cancer in a High-Risk Refugee Community in the United States***

Project Leads: ***Lucy L. Shi, MD; Danielle K. Depalo, BS; Amy Chen MD, MPH***

Betel nut (BN) is a psychoactive substance that is commonly used in Asian cultures, including among members of the refugee resettlement area of Clarkston, GA. While the association between chronic BN mastication and oral cancer has been established, these health consequences may not be appreciated by users in these communities. Our objective is to investigate patient awareness of BN health risks and to assess the efficacy of a pilot, visually-guided educational initiative. Patients from two clinics in Clarkston, GA were approached for the study. Patients were divided into two cohorts depending on their familiarity with BN and were administered surveys specific to their cohort and level of familiarity with BN. An educational initiative was subsequently conducted with both groups, which entailed reviewing an illustrated educational brochure, and a post-test was administered. These results were then statistically analyzed to determine trends in community BN usage and effectiveness of our intervention.

For our pilot study, 48 patients were surveyed for the familiar cohort and 25 for the unfamiliar cohort. Our results showed that BN usage was prevalent in the Clarkston, GA community, with up to 42.8% of respondents reporting social use. Among the familiar cohort, 75% believed BN was harmful for health and 52.3% believed BN alone could cause cancer compared to 8% and 4% among the unfamiliar cohort respectively ($p<0.0001$). Following the educational intervention, patient knowledge that BN mastication is harmful improved for the familiar (100%, $p=0.011$) and unfamiliar cohorts (100%, $p<0.0001$). Post-intervention patients in the familiar cohort were more likely to acknowledge that BN alone could cause cancer (87.5%, $p=0.0005$) and both cohorts improved their ability to identify oral cancer in an image ($p<0.01$). Our study highlights knowledge gaps on the carcinogenic properties of BN among a high-risk refugee population and awareness of the signs of oral cancer in the entire community. In addition, we also demonstrate the potential efficacy of a pilot visually-guided educational brochure to improve patient knowledge of BN and oral cancer presentations.

Through the AHNS grant, we hope to expand our educational and outreach efforts to areas beyond the Clarkston, GA community. There is a major South Asian population within metropolitan Atlanta, many of whom likely have exposure to BN. Through funding for widespread poster printing, brochure distribution, and community events, we hope our interventions can help to limit BN use and encourage early detection of cancer in these communities.

2017

Project: ***Screening Fair in Little Haiti, Miami – University of Miami***
Project Leads: ***Brandon Burroway, Misha Armstrong, Simon Menaker, Dipan Desai***

We greatly appreciate the generosity of the American Head and Neck Society; we could not have accomplished our goals without the funding received from the 2017 community service grant. Our events were a definitive success with about 240 individuals screened for head and neck cancer across our five sites. At the Center for Haitian Studies site specifically, about 80 individuals were screened, eight of which qualified as high risk and in need of immediate follow-up care. Many more individuals were also referred for less immediate follow-up care to otolaryngology and to a number of other specialties including primary care, dentistry, and dermatology. One extremely useful change we made this year was utilizing the help of a social worker from the Center for Haitian Studies to help organize follow-up care for the patients, before they even left the clinic the day of the fair.

An abstract regarding our screening model was accepted for the 2017 American Public Health Association Conference, and we hope to contribute to the literature through additional papers and presentations. Next year, we will strive to further expand the fairs in order to serve as many members of the community as possible.

The grant money was used in order to print educational and survey materials for the participants, pay for translation and security services for the fair, and to pay for advertising via the radio and newspaper which is the way the vast majority of individuals learned about the screening event. Thank you again for helping us make this year's screening events a success.